



A World of Knowledge

**MAIN LIBRARY
CATAWBA COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
115 West C Street
Newton, NC 28658**

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Library manager loves history, storytelling

SHERRILLS FORD—After 12 years at the helm of Sherrills Ford Branch Library, Sandy Cooke thinks of the community as family.

“This community looks out for the library and its staff,” she says. “They really support us.”

Any library programming is well-attended by the residents who’ve doubled in numbers in recent years. Children’s programs are well-received as are author readings arranged by an active Friends group. A local garden club helps maintain a landscaped area near the building that’s often used by for reading and picnicking.



“People see this as a community center,” Cooke said. Over the years, she’s seen much change as thousands have moved into the area to retire or to work, a good many in the racing business.

The most popular materials are new fiction and audio books which are used by individuals who commute to jobs. Movies are also popular among those who spend weekends at the lake.

Cooke can relate to families on the move. She grew up at Navy installations around the South and the Caribbean. Her interest in children’s literature was evident while studying at Belmont Abbey College. Moving to Catawba County in 1974, she began volunteering at her children’s school, later worked as a substitute teacher and was eventually hired by the library system as an assistant in 1991. She especially enjoys working with preschoolers through the library’s outreach program to child care centers, an ongoing effort designed to encourage early reading.

Cooke's artistic abilities mean she's called on to help with special events and projects. Currently, she and other librarians are coordinating collages and shadow boxes to support the BIG Read, the county-wide adult literacy initiative supported by the county library as well as Hickory Public Library System, Catawba Valley Community College and Lenoir-Rhyne College. This year's book is a novel, *The Bridge*, by Doug Marlette, which focuses on the 1934 General Textile Strike in North Carolina. The project involves book discussions as well as author visits and other support programming.

Tom Young of Old Country Store in Catawba and Nancy Rhyne of Treasures of Catawba loaned items which have added to the authenticity of the displays which will be used throughout the library system this spring.

History is a passion for Cooke, who is a Civil War re-enactor attached to the N.C. 26th Regiment known as Reilly's Battery. She and her fellow re-enactors don authentic dress to portray encampments throughout North Carolina, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

"I made my own clothes, and usually I weave baskets or tend to horses during the encampments," says Cooke. As a Civil War matron, she becomes part of the "story," which has taken her to such notable places as Fredericksburg, Gettysburg and the Shenandoah Valley battlefield sites.

Her thirst for action stories is revealed in her reading preferences.

"I love James Patterson and Alex Cross--books that are plot-driven and make you think," she says.



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